

HAUSS NURSERY

Celebrates 50 Years of Seedling Production

By *Coleen Vansant*
Information Manager, Alabama Forestry Commission

Much of the growing process at the nursery is done by hand. Here workers tend to the young seedlings that will be lifted this winter.

This year the Alabama Forestry Commission's E. A. Hauss Nursery celebrates its 50th anniversary of producing quality genetically improved seedlings at affordable prices for landowners of Alabama.

Although the youngest of the Alabama Forestry Commission's (AFC) once three productive nurseries, Hauss Nursery is now the dominant nursery for the AFC, producing 100 percent of the bare root seedlings. In the last decade, the Commission began phasing out Stauffer Nursery in Opelika and Miller Nursery in Autaugaville and moved all bare root operations to the Hauss facility near Atmore.

Named for the late Edward A. Hauss, who was president of Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company when that company donated 50 acres of land to the Commission in 1951, the nursery has produced approximately 1,300,000,000 seedlings in its half century of existence. That milestone was reached on January 24, 1991. The first seedling crop was harvested in the winter of 1952-53 with a total of 7,402 seedlings being produced. In the last 50 years the nursery

A Forest In My Hand

*A joyful sun burst over the hill
Sweeping away the morning's chill
While planting seedlings in the earth
A giant forest was taking birth!
Soon to shelter white-tailed deer
Where creatures small can disappear
Seedlings bought from a nursery land
Tiny roots still moist with sand.
Each was placed in pockets deep
Where spring rains would gently seep
I heeled them in, rooted, deep secure
Each one a tree in miniature.
Never knowing whose eyes will gaze
Or come to rest under forest's shade
Their bodies cooled by the tallest tree
But it was I who planted thee.
Their strength and beauty for all time
Will enrich the lives of yours and mine
Though storms will rage, able to withstand
I held a forest in my hand.*

-- By Jacqueline Pitts

This poem, written by a customer, has been displayed in the Hauss Nursery office for several years.

has grown to approximately 400 acres of owned and leased land and to the production capacity of 60 million seedlings. The packing shed at the Hauss complex can process 1,200,000 seedlings per day.

When construction began in 1951, the nursery was placed under the management of Carl A. Mueller and in 50 years has seen only four additional nursery managers; Marty Schupeltz, Sam Campbell, Philip Wilson, and current manager Craig Frazier. It has had only three nursery supervisors in the same period of time: Mueller, Marlin Mack, and at present, Bobby Wooten.

Over the last 50 years many changes have occurred at Hauss Nursery. In the past, longleaf seedlings were planted and harvested by hand without the help of machinery. Seed for each 100-foot bed was measured out in a paper bag and sown by hand into the beds. In 1982 a Whitfield tree planter was purchased which made planting longleaf much easier. However, it was the purchase of a 1986 Grayco harvester that made a significant difference in production at Hauss Nursery. Before the purchase of the planter, workers could pull by hand



Above: These old wooden lifting boxes were used at Hauss Nursery for many years.

Right: Although the sign is new, this is the door of the original seedling cooler at Hauss Nursery. With additional coolers the nursery has the capability to store seed for up to 5 years. When the nursery began it produced 3 species of pine. Now it produces 22 different species of both pine and hardwood.



This is the staff of Hauss Nursery today. Pictured from left to right are: Autry Ziglar, Charles "Buddy" Salter, Albert Singleton, Craig Fraizer, Bobby Wooten, and Kelvin Ephraim.



Nancy Givens processes orders on the computer. The ordering and tracking process was automated in 1984.



Left: Workers in the packing shed can process 1,200,000 seedlings per day.

100,000 longleaf seedlings per day. With the mechanical harvester, production jumped to 200,000 per day.

At one time, nursery workers cut packing sticks by hand; now they are purchased pre-cut. Workers also had to go into the swamps to rake moss for packing the delicate seedlings; now they are packed with Viterra, a gel that

keeps the roots of the baled seedlings moist. Formerly, seedling orders were taken at the county level and mailed to the nursery; in 1984 a computer was installed which made the ordering process and record keeping at Hauss Nursery much more efficient. Today you can even visit the Commission's web page at www.forestry.state.al.us for a seedling price list and order form.

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This photo was taken of Hauss Nursery December 16, 1953, by Tim McKinney from the Luscombe plane. This was the first year after production began at Hauss in 1951-52.

Originally Hauss produced only three species: loblolly, longleaf, and slash pine. In the 1995-96 production year, the Alabama Forestry Commission began to offer varieties beneficial to wildlife and now they produce over 22 different species of pine and hardwood bare root seedlings. In the old days, once these trees were lifted and packed, county personnel traveled to the nurseries to pick up the seedlings for landowners. Now

they are delivered by refrigerated truck to seven different distribution points across the state where they are picked up by landowners.

Last year, Hauss received a new seed cooler that



This 1986 photo shows nursery workers loading seedlings onto a trailer for transportation to the grading shed.



A landmark at E.A. Hauss for many years, this water tower was erected when the nursery was established and functioned until it was dismantled in 1998.

provides space to store up to five years of seed under ideal conditions. All pine seed planted at Hauss Nursery is genetically improved seed, harvested from Commission tree nurseries. The AFC also produces its own

seed for sawtooth oak, dogwood, red bud, and autumn olive.

There have been many changes at Hauss Nursery and in the Alabama Forestry Commission's nursery program in the last few years, changes that have brought the Commission's seedling program into the 21st century with continued commitment to customer satisfaction through the production and distribution of the highest quality seedlings at reasonable prices. ♣